



COMMUNIQUÉ
58th MEETING OF THE OECS AUTHORITY
Montserrat Cultural Centre
Montserrat
November 21 - 22, 2013

The Fifty-Eighth Meeting of the OECS Authority was convened at Montserrat Cultural Centre in Montserrat over the period November 21 - 22, 2013 under the Chairman Honourable Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda. With the exception of the British Virgin Islands, all Member States were in attendance and representation of Heads of Government included Anguilla, Montserrat, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Also in attendance were the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) and the Secretary General of the Caribbean Community.

In the main, the Meeting focused on, inter alia:

- (a) The OECS Growth and Development Strategy
- (b) Update on the OECS Economic Union
- (c) Martinique Accession to the OECS
- (d) Japanese Proposal for a Fund to support OECS Fisheries
- (e) 11th EDF Programme for the OECS
- (f) ECTEL Financing Arrangements
- (g) OECS CARICOM and the Status of the Carve Out
- (h) The Caribbean Development Fund (CDF)

OECS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Authority received the completed version of the OECS Growth and Development Strategy and accepted it as an appropriate framework for the implementation of joint initiatives to promote the OECS' developmental agenda within the context of the Economic Union.

The Authority agreed that, in the first instance, the document will provide the framework for the implementation of a short term action plan to deal with the immediate growth and development challenges and opportunities that are in keeping with the region's thrust towards sustainable development and enhanced resilience.

The Authority spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the status of the OECS economy and agreed to meet on December 3rd, 2013 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to map out specific joint interventions to advance the OECS economy in the future.

OECS ECONOMIC UNION: ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The OECS provided an update on implementation of the Revised Treaty of Basseterre, the free movement of OECS citizens and related issues under consideration. Discussions focused on progress made on the common market and free movement of goods, public awareness and sensitization, ease of travel, harmonization of labour legislation in the OECS, and completion policy and law in OECS Member States.

OECS Heads of Government agreed:

- (a) On the need to expedite work on the free circulation of goods
- (b) On a regional approach to the treatment of goods produced in Free Zones
- (c) On a regional approach for the treatment of enterprises engaged in the provision of financial services.
- (d) On the further promotion of public education and sensitization interventions involving cross-border transportation.

OECS Heads of Government noted the significant progress made in advancing the regime for travel facilitation within the OECS Economic Union.

MARTINIQUE'S ACCESSION TO THE OECS

OECS Heads of Government agreed on a draft Agreement as the basis for further discussions towards finalizing Martinique's accession as an Associate Member to the OECS.

The Authority commended the work of the OECS Negotiating Team and its Martiniquan counterpart in arriving at this historic juncture.

JAPANESE PROPOSAL FOR A FUND IN SUPPORT OF THE OECS FISHERIES

The OECS Heads of Government received a paper from the Secretariat which provided basic information on the establishment of a Promotion Fund to be provided by the Japanese Government in support of fisheries development in the OECS. The paper highlighted some of the critical issues to be considered in the decision making process in the establishment of the Fund.

The Authority decided to establish a Technical Committee comprising Permanent Secretaries/Financial Secretaries of Ministries of Finance from Member States to review

the Proposal and to present its findings and recommendations to Heads of Government before the next Authority meeting.

OECS-CARICOM AND THE STATUS OF THE “CARVE OUT”

OECS Heads of Government reviewed the proposed draft Protocol to amend the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to allow for the recognition of the OECS Economic Union.

Heads of Government agreed to ensure that there will be active participation by the Attorneys General of the OECS in the upcoming CARICOM Legal Affairs Committee scheduled for November 29th at which this matter will be dealt with for final agreement by Heads of Government of CARICOM.

ECTEL FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS

OECS Heads of Government considered the issue of the use and allotment of “cash surplus” funds that have accrued from the collection of Spectrum Fees by ECTEL on behalf of its contracting states.

OECS Heads of Government agreed that the ECTEL Council of Ministers must adhere to Article 10(7) of the ECTEL Treaty and must obey the provisions for the use and distribution of the funds as contained therein.

11TH EDF PROGRAMME FOR THE OECS

The Authority received a presentation on the proposed OECS regional financing under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). The proposed areas of focus included the deepening and widening of regional integration; climate change, sustainable development and economic resilience; and crime and security.

The Authority agreed that these areas should be further developed in consultation with National Representatives with a view to securing the resources to advance OECS’ regional priorities.

The Authority further agreed that there is a need for political engagement at the highest level between OECS Heads of Governments and the European Commission in the first quarter of 2014 to address, inter alia, access to and effective targeting of the resources.

CDF SUPPORT FOR THE OECS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The Authority received a presentation which indicated that the Caribbean Development Fund (CDF) is preparing a new Strategic Plan to guide its operations for the 2nd funding cycle.

The Authority endorsed the agreement for the establishment of a national Committee, comprising Planning officials and OECS Commissioners, who will collaborate with CDF officials in determining possible areas for future support of the OECS to guide the strategic thrust of the CDF in the next programming cycle. The Authority further agreed that the Committee will discuss the matter regarding the funding of the CDF in going forward.

ANGUILLA AND BVI ACCESSION

OECS Heads of Government reiterated the need for concerted efforts to be made by Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands to accede to the Revised Treaty of Basseterre (RTB); thereby allowing for the full participation by those Associated Member States in the new arrangements introduced by the RTB.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CONSTITUTIONAL COURT RULING

OECS Heads of Government expressed their collective abhorrence at the 23rd September 2013 Ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic that effectively renders stateless thousands of men women and children mostly of Haitian descent. This decision of the Constitutional Court is deemed to be repulsive and discriminatory.

OECS Heads of Government deeply regret the failure of the Dominican Republic to take corrective measures. Accordingly the OECS Authority calls on the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to suspend immediately any consideration of the application by the DR for Membership of CARICOM. Further, until this injustice has been addressed OECS Member States would find it extremely difficult to engage with the Dominican Republic in various fora including within the Councils of the Caribbean Forum of ACP group of States.

The OECS Authority therefore calls on other regional and hemispheric Organisations to speak out unequivocally in condemnation of this ruling.

GRATITUDE TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The Authority recorded its gratitude and best wishes to the Director General, Dr. Len Ishmael and the Director of Economic Affairs, Mr. Randolph Cato for their years of dedicated and committed services to the OECS region in general and in advancing the work of the Organisation in particular.

OECS Heads of Government collectively expressed their appreciation to both Dr. Ishmael and Mr. Cato for their invaluable contribution to advancing the OECS Economic Union agenda.